

Say It Straight

Brief Program Description

The goals of Say It Straight (SIS) training are the prevention of risky or destructive behaviors, such as alcohol/tobacco/other drug (ATOD) use, violence, teen pregnancy, behavior leading to HIV/AIDS, and promotion of wellness, self-awareness, personal and social responsibility, good communication skills, positive self-esteem, and positive relationships. SIS creates opportunities for people to discover their internal resources, connect to their deepest wishes, and develop the skills needed to express and implement them in appropriate ways. Because the training is co-created by participants, it gives them a sense of ownership, and transcends culture, age and gender. It has been successfully implemented in schools, with parents and community, as well as in probation, detention and treatment settings. Addressing individual, family and community risk and protective factors, SIS aims for the development of self-sustaining prevention communities.

Program Strategies

SIS training involves the use of action-oriented modalities, such as body sculpting (i.e. positioning the body to overtly express the internal experience of a communication process) and making movies. Through practice, people discover their deepest yearnings and gain the skills to express their wishes while being respectful of others. Students and adults create movies that portray challenging situations important in their lives. Students usually create movies that explore positive behaviors in difficult interpersonal situations that often involve peer pressure. Such situations include alcohol/drug abuse, drinking and driving, driving and speeding, cheating, name calling, stealing, vandalism, cutting school, planning a party, sexual behavior, etc. The situations mirror behaviors that young people say they are challenged to do by their peers. Adults create movies that are relevant to them, focusing on situations at home, at work, and with their friends. By exploring different communications embedded in the movies, participants become aware of specific actions that are vulnerable to the threat of betraying their own deepest wisdom, they become aware of their ability to respond with behaviors that reduce the threat (self-efficacy), and they perform effective coping behaviors that reduce the threat (response to efficacy). They experience feeling good, regardless of the outcome of the interaction, because they did not betray themselves. In movies that explore giving positive support to someone about whose behavior they are concerned, people discover that by expressing friendship, respect and caring, they maximize the possibility of a positive change. In this process, they also discover their own deepest wish is to support a friend's or loved one's highest aspirations.

Population Focus

Say It Straight is appropriate for a wide age group and sensitive across gender, socioeconomic, and cultural/ethnic populations. It has been successfully implemented with children and teens (grades 3-12) in urban and rural settings, as well as parents and communities.

Suitable Settings

SIS has been successfully delivered in schools (including alternative schools), community programs, detention and treatment settings. It also has been successfully used with chemically-dependent mothers in residential treatment with their children.

Required Resources

The workbooks, “Say It Straight: Training in Straightforward Communication,” are used to enhance cognitive learning and give participants the opportunity to keep a journal during the training. Workbooks are available for elementary, middle and high school students and parents/community.

Other Resources

Three videotapes are available, “Say It Straight: In the Classroom,” “Say It Straight: Student Support Group” and “Say It Straight: Family-Community.” These are especially helpful when working with families and community. The game, “Say It Straight Challenge” can be played by students and families.

Implementation Timeline

Basic SIS training is conducted with students in school during 5-10 regular class sessions of approximately 50 minutes each.

Outcomes

The goals of Say It Straight training are the prevention of risky or destructive behaviors. An analysis of several studies revealed the following:

- In one middle school study (grades 6-8), the SIS school (experimental) had significantly fewer students with alcohol and other drug-related school suspensions and referrals during the academic year compared to two control

middle schools. Furthermore, none of the suspensions or referrals in the experimental school occurred after SIS training. The table below shows a comparison of the 12 suspensions or referrals among 787 students in the experimental school compared to the 55 suspensions or referrals among the 1484 students in the two control schools over one academic year. Furthermore, trained 8th graders were monitored the following year in two junior high schools. No new users (defined by alcohol/drug suspensions) were identified among them during the whole academic year.

- In a study of 9th -12th graders, SIS training significantly reduced the number of juvenile criminal police offenders among 357 trained (experimental) compared to 594 untrained (control) students during a period of 19 months past training. Their offenses included burglary, aggravated assault, other assaults, vandalism, alcohol/drug related offenses, run-away, overdose, etc. The table below compares 9 offenses incurred by 357 trained (experimental) students and 67 offenses incurred by 594 untrained students (control) in a 19 month period after training.

Contact Information

For indepth information on this program, please use the contact listed below.

Program Developer

Dr. Paula Englander-Golden, Ph.D.

Say It Straight Foundation

6254 Paseo Elegancia

Carlsbad, CA 92009

Phone: 760-431-1147

Fax: 509-278-7009

Email: golden@scs.unt.edu